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General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

115th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 September 2010, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki ..... (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 16 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Letter dated 23 August 2010 from the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/64/906)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In the letter contained in document A/64/906, I have been informed of the interest of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in becoming a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. As delegations are aware, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX), of 10 November 1975, members of the Committee are appointed by the General Assembly.

The proposal before the General Assembly is for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to be included in the membership of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to the enlargement of the membership of that Committee by appointing the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as a member of the Committee?

It was so decided.

Mrs. Hernández Toledano (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I apologize for the fact that, although my Ambassador was to make this statement, he has momentarily left the Hall. I should therefore like to express Cuba's position on his behalf.

Cuba welcomes the decision just taken by the Assembly to formally endorse the inclusion of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as a full member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Cuba, which in 1975 was one of the Committee's 20 founding members, welcomes the increase in the Committee's membership. This is a clear reflection of the international growing support for the efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has historically maintained a firm position of support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, against the illegal occupation of Arab territories and in favour of an comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We are certain that Venezuela's membership will contribute to strengthening the Committee and to its successful fulfilment of its important responsibilities. There is much to be done, and the obstacles are great. However, we trust that, sooner or later, an end will be put to the occupation of all Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and that an independent State of Palestine will be established on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Troya (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Ecuador associates itself with the statement that has just been made by the representative of Cuba. We welcome Venezuela's membership in the

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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people and are resolutely convinced that the sisterly republic of Venezuela will greatly contribute to the success of the Committee.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 16.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

Report of Economic and Social Council

Draft resolution (A/64/L.55/Rev.1)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on this agenda item at its 26th plenary meeting, on 27 October 2009.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.55/Rev.1.

Mr. Al-Aud (Yemen): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.55/Rev.1, entitled "Extension of the transition period preceding the graduation of Samoa from least developed country status".

Samoa has suffered unprecedented human and material losses as a result of the Pacific Ocean tsunami of 29 September 2009. Pursuant to the draft resolution before us, the General Assembly would decide to extend for a period of three years the transition period that Samoa is presently benefiting from among the least developed countries. The draft resolution has been negotiated by our partners, and I am happy to report that we were able to reach consensus.

Allow me to thank all delegations for their flexibility and cooperation on this issue.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/64/L.55/Rev.1, entitled "Extension of the transition period preceding the graduation of Samoa from least developed country status".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/64/L.55/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/64/L.55/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 64/295).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position following the adoption of the resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I give the floor to the representative of Samoa.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): The date of 29 September 2009 will be forever etched in our national memory and conscience. That was the fateful day when part of Samoa was demolished by the deadliest natural disaster in our recorded history. The tsunami happened very fast and for the briefest of time, belying the sobering aftermath of its fury and the painful memories and harrowing stories of survivors, whose souls will be scarred for life.

One hundred and forty-three innocent lives — mainly those of women, the elderly and children — were taken unceremoniously, robbed of their human dignity and worth. Over 500 families became homeless and displaced in the wink of an eye. Costly infrastructural facilities and hard-earned public and private properties were destroyed. Suddenly, Samoa's economic outlook appeared vulnerable and its future uncertain.

In 2007, the General Assembly decided to graduate Samoa from the category of least developed country by December of this year. A year into the transition period, Samoa's economy was already experiencing severe contraction due to the global recession. It should be borne in mind that the world economic crisis and the tsunami both happened after the decision on the graduation issue had already been taken. Put simply, neither crisis was ever envisaged or predicted, and their combined impacts were never factored into the 2007 decision. Looking back at the sequence of events, it is a truism and another subtle reminder that, while man can plan and take decisions as he likes, nature cannot always be influenced or forced to comply.

The imminent end in December of Samoa's transition period out of the least developed country category, coupled with the massive reconstruction costs associated with the tsunami, which amount to about 20 per cent of Samoa's gross domestic product, our Government, not surprisingly, was obliged to bring these realities to the attention of the General Assembly and to request an extension of the transition period.

That is the genesis and backdrop to resolution 64/295. The need for an extension commensurate with the gravity of the reconstruction task at hand was

genuine and real. Fittingly, therefore, by adopting the resolution by consensus today, the Assembly has given Samoa and its people the gift of a rainbow of hope in place of the tsunami of despair. Exactly three weeks from today, the Government and people of Samoa will hold a national commemorative service to mark the first anniversary of this tragic chapter in our history. While it will be a day to mourn and pay homage to the memories of those killed by the tsunami, it will also provide a window of opportunity for thanksgiving for the rebirth of a devastated island and for the gradual triumph of the human spirit over the elements.

In the same vein, allow me to place on record Samoa's gratitude to those whose leadership and support have been crucial. Without it, today's consensus adoption of the resolution would have been in doubt. One or two in that special category need to be singled out. First, the Permanent Representative of Nepal, as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Group of Least Developed Countries, was instrumental in facilitating the Group's adoption of our draft resolution as its own. Moreover, his Mission succeeded in securing the agreement of the Group of 77 and China to support it.

Secondly, Yemen's Permanent Representative, as Chair of the Group of 77 and China, ably supported by his staff, not only took ownership of the draft resolution, but successfully negotiated it with the other groups at the United Nations to ensure that the outcome would be not a contentious one, but rather one that enjoyed unanimous support.

Thirdly, I would like to thank our development partners, who not only understood our unique challenges but gave us support when we needed it most. Other negotiating groups, whose support was equally vital to the granting of the extension, stood by us and did not let us down.

Last but not least, you and your Office, Mr. President, were sympathetic and accommodating and played a facilitating role to ensure that Samoa's priority concern would get centre-stage attention and be resolved successfully under your watch. Despite our crowded agenda at this session, your Office, together with the General Assembly Affairs Branch, prevailed so that a decision on our resolution could become part of the list of achievements of the sixty-fourth session.

We thank everyone I have mentioned and the wider membership of the United Nations for their unanimous vote of confidence and for giving Samoa much-needed space and time to ensure that our smooth transition will ultimately lead to a durable and sustainable graduation out of the category of least developed countries in about three years.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position following the adoption of the resolution.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 42?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 14

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/819)

Draft resolution (A/64/L.62)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.62.

Mr. Lomaia (Georgia): Today, I would like to introduce draft resolution A/64/L.62 on the right of Georgia's internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to finally return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner.

Over the course of the past 17 years, more than 400,000 people have been driven from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia. Their homes have been destroyed or sold off and their families and communities torn apart. Despite countless calls by the international community and the tireless efforts of the Government of Georgia, those men, women and children have been prevented from returning to their homes.

All told, IDPs represent a staggering 75 per cent of the pre-war population of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. It is a testament to the indomitable nature of the human spirit that today they continue to live in hope of a better future. The length of time away from their homes and their lands has not diminished their desire to see them again. Each and every one carries a dream in his or her heart of returning to their roots and to the soil that nurtured

generations of their ancestors, and to share all that with their children. Any of us would feel exactly the same sense of passionate loss if were we in a similar situation.

The displaced are of various ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including Armenian, Estonian, Georgian, Greek and Ukrainian. Among them are Christians, Muslims and Jews. There are at least two things that unite all of them. The first is the fact that they have lived, worked and loved in the same cities and villages. They are attached to those places by unbreakable, enduring emotional and spiritual bonds. They are also bound by their common experience as victims of brutal ethnic cleansing — a fact that has been established, confirmed and condemned by most credible international bodies, including this one.

This is not the first time that we have introduced this draft resolution. Over the past three years, representatives gathered here have become acquainted with the details surrounding the troubles of Georgia's IDPs and refugees. Since the adoption of a similar resolution last year (resolution 63/307), the situation on the ground has not changed. IDPs and refugees are still unable to return. Some continue to live in collective shelters, and others with their relatives. Despite the efforts of the Government to fully reintegrate them into society, challenges and pain remain.

Only a very brave few have managed to return to their homes. Spontaneous returns have occurred only in places immediately adjacent to the occupation line. Those courageous souls continue to suffer the fear of insecurity and inequality, living under the threat of expulsion, forced conscription, passportization, losing their ethnic identity and the denial of their right to education in their mother tongue. Moreover, the authorities in effective control have taken measures that deprive those individuals of the right to move freely.

We strongly believe that the silent tragedy of those people provides ample cause for the General Assembly to again consider this issue. In that context, in his recent report, Mr. Walter Kälin, Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights for Internally Displaced Persons, urges all parties to

> "take all necessary steps to ensure persons displaced by the recent and past conflicts are able to enjoy their right to return voluntarily to their former homes in safety and dignity" (*A/HRC/13/21/Add.3, annex, para. 47*).

We believe that keeping this issue on the agenda of the General Assembly is one significant step towards contributing to the eventual return of the displaced persons.

An important tool provided by this draft resolution is the annual reporting by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the status of IDPs and refugees. This reporting procedure is a measure of transparency and a necessary tool of international engagement with the fate of the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. Most important, though, the draft resolution before us resonates with the General Assembly's humanitarian mission. It sends a powerful signal to all those forcefully displaced in my country, as well as others in similar conditions all around the world, that the international community stands by them. We are also convinced that the draft resolution will give positive impetus to the ongoing Geneva process.

Despite the lack of progress over past years, hundreds of thousands of Georgia's IDPs and refugees have again vested their expectations in this house, hoping for a helpful decision from the General Assembly. All that they have, apart from that hope, are small sentimental items to help them remember their past lives: fading photos, keys to houses that may have been sold off, and their memories. We as a community of States must have a positive impact every time it is within our reach to do so. I believe that this is one of those cases. The General Assembly has an inherent responsibility to attend to the silent plea of the IDPs and refugees. I urge the Assembly to vote in favour of this draft resolution.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Draft resolution A/64/L.62, which is before the General Assembly, unfortunately has nothing to do with the noble humanitarian goals and concerns to which its authors refer. Furthermore, this initiative is exclusively political in its motivation and is based on short-term calculations by the Georgian party, which seeks to reject any responsibility for the situation that arose precisely because of the policies of the Georgian Government, culminating with the attack on civilians in Tskhinvali on the night of 7 August 2008.

The draft resolution is disconnected from reality. The sponsors of this initiative — stubbornly, to say the least — refuse to recognize the existence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as autonomous independent States. It is Tbilisi, through its aggressive posture, that has forever buried the notion of the possible return of those peoples to a unified State. The situation in the southern Caucasus was created not by some mysterious foreign plot, but by the actions of the Saakashvili regime.

With regard to the recommendations of the draft resolution, they are totally unrealistic in practical terms. As an example, I would refer to the idea of developing a timetable for the early return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The authors of the draft resolution have not taken account of the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/64/819), which refers to the issue. Otherwise, they would have looked at paragraph 33 of the report, which says that

> "Given the prevailing environment and continuing discussions between the parties over status issues, it is premature at the present stage to develop a timetable for the voluntary return of all of the refugees and internally displaced persons who wish to avail themselves of this right".

The adoption of the draft resolution would do considerable harm to ongoing discussions in Geneva, in which we are considering the status of refugees and IDPs. The Georgian party fully understands that, but stubbornly continues to press its initiative. Furthermore, as the Secretary-General has said in his report, it is the Geneva process, in which the Abkhazian and South Ossetian parties are taking part, that provides the only way forward.

This is clearly not an attempt to alleviate the situation of those who find themselves forcibly displaced. The adoption of the draft resolution would serve only to detract from the realistic practical measures being taken in the region. It would not enhance confidence-building measures between the Georgian, Abkhazian and South Ossetian parties, which are a prerequisite for resolving other issues, including that of refugees and IDPs. Everyone must understand that, irrespective of their geopolitical assessment of the situation in the region.

Finally, given all these considerations, the delegation of the Russian Federation would like to move that no action be taken on the draft resolution and that a vote be taken in that connection. By refusing to consider such a politicized and confrontational initiative, the General Assembly and States Members of the United Nations would be doing much more for refugees and IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia than by voting for the proposed, odious text.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has moved, under the terms of rule 74 of the rules of procedure, that no action be taken with respect to draft resolution A/64/L.62. The rule reads as follows:

> "During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote."

I would therefore invite delegations that so wish to speak either for or against the motion. There will be no more than two delegations speaking in favour and no more than two speaking against.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Nicaragua supports the no-action motion on draft resolution A/64/L.62 moved by the representative of the Russian Federation. We believe that initiatives on such important issues as assistance to refugees and displaced persons should be the result of a broad consensus and the product of an open, transparent and participatory process, especially between the parties involved. We understand that the conversations taking place in Geneva under the joint chairmanship of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations should remain the critical forum par excellence in which to address issues related not only to security and stability in the region, but also to humanitarian problems, including those regarding refugees and internally displaced persons.

The draft resolution before us today would considerably undermine the discussions taking place in Geneva. Such initiatives tend to promote partial measures that reflect only the viewpoints of one of the parties involved. They will not produce the positive results needed for this issue or assist in building a climate of mutual confidence between the parties. Therefore, the delegation of Nicaragua supports the

no-action motion and calls on other delegations to support it.

Mr. Ovysanko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus notes the complexity of the issue of the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, addressed in draft resolution A/64/L.62. There is no agreement on it between the main parties involved. The issue is being discussed in Geneva, and we therefore believe that the General Assembly should not adopt this draft resolution.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom strongly urges delegations to vote against this motion. We do so for reasons of principle. A motion to adjourn an item sine die represents an attempt to prevent the consideration of a draft resolution on procedural grounds. The calling of such a motion aims at denying States Members of the United Nations their sovereign right to bring before the General Assembly any concern they themselves deem to merit its attention and at limiting the agenda of the Assembly. This runs contrary to the good practice of the General Assembly. No-action motions contradict one of the ideas on which the creation of the United Nations was based, namely, that issues of concern to Member States shall be addressed and discussed openly. Each proposal presented in the General Assembly deserves consideration on its own merits, so we strongly urge delegations to vote against this no-action motion regardless of their views and voting intentions on the substance of the draft resolution.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): The no-action motion that has just been moved seeks to prevent the General Assembly from considering a proposal that has been submitted to us for reasons of substance. France is opposed out of principle to such a motion. Indeed, the General Assembly should be in a position to discuss any subject, despite any difficulties there may be in terms of its substance. To submit such a motion is to seek to deny the States Members of the United Nations their sovereign right to submit to the General Assembly any concern that they consider to merit consideration by this organ. It is clearly contrary to the good practices of the General Assembly. For that reason, my delegation will vote against the no-action motion and calls upon other delegations to do the same, irrespective of their intention with regard to voting on the draft resolution itself.

The President: I shall now put to the vote the motion submitted by the representative of the Russian Federation that no action be taken on draft resolution A/64/L.62.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Lao (People's Democratic Republic of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Serbia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tonga, Uganda, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Angola, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the

Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Suriname, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates

The motion was rejected by 32 votes to 67, with 54 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegation of Gabon advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

Mr. Viinanen (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: As the motion for no action has not been adopted, the Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/64/L.62.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

Armenia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Serbia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Zambia

Draft resolution A/64/L.62 was adopted by 50 votes to 17, with 86 abstentions (resolution 64/296).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland would like to explain its abstention in the voting on resolution 64/296, introduced by Georgia and entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

Switzerland underlines its support for the discussions held in Geneva following the 2008 conflict and agrees to provide on its territory the most favourable conditions possible for the handling of the issue raised by Georgia, in particular. As an unwavering aspect of its policy, Switzerland recalls the duty to give special attention to the status of internally displaced persons and refugees in post-conflict situations and to their right of return to their places of origin.

Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania): At the outset, I would like once again to reiterate my country's firm support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. Lithuania voted in favour of resolution 64/296 because we note with concern that no major development with regard to the ability of refugees and internally displaced persons to exercise their right of return has taken place since the adoption of the analogous resolution last year

(resolution 63/307). There are still hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in the area.

Lithuania sees this resolution as an important means for solving the plight of the affected population, in particular as it calls on all participants in the Geneva discussions to intensify their efforts to establish a durable peace and to create favourable security conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of all internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of origin.

We also commend the Government of Georgia for adopting the Action Plan for Engagement (see A/64/875, annex). Its implementation will demonstrate Georgia's further commitment to this issue.

Lithuania also welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 63/307 (A/64/819) and supports its conclusions, which, among other things, reiterates the readiness of the United Nations to assist in implementing the agreed steps and measures, despite the continued lack of access remaining a major concern. We also fully support the Secretary-General in his urging all participants in the Geneva discussions

> "to engage constructively, with a genuine will to improve the situation of the local population" (*A/64/819, para. 36*).

Mrs. Intelmann (Estonia): Estonia voted in favour of resolution 64/296. Our decision follows from a strong and long-standing commitment to fundamental humanitarian principles.

The resolution deals with the plight of internally displaced persons in Georgia. Following the conflict in 1992, their condition has been of concern for many years. The armed conflict in August 2008 led to further displacement. Unfortunately, over the past year, no major positive developments have occurred. The situation requires continued efforts from all parties and international support and attention, including from the United Nations. We reiterate the importance of the Geneva talks, of which the European Union is a counterpart.

In 2006, Member States decided to include on the agenda of the General Assembly the item entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", under which we have been able to discuss many important issues. Most of these issues remain unresolved.

While the resolution adopted today is humanitarian in nature, we cannot deny the fact that there are many unresolved, deep and long-standing political issues that have caused and continue to cause internal displacement in Georgia.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate its firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect of the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): I am taking the floor to briefly explain our position. Let me first emphasize that, regardless of our position on the issue at hand today, we believe that it is the right of any delegation to bring an issue to the attention of the General Assembly and, if it deems necessary, to present a draft resolution.

I would also like to reiterate Turkey's firm and unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We remain concerned that the conflicts in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia remain unresolved and that this situation has serious economic, social and humanitarian consequences.

In the prevailing circumstances, the Geneva talks provide a valuable forum to also address the issue of the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of internally displaced persons and refugees. We hope that the discussions in Geneva can be made to reach their full potential in order to have positive and concrete outcomes. To achieve that, we call on all sides to seriously engage with the others in a cooperative and proactive manner. We also call on all parties to refrain from taking any steps that would aggravate the situation of the displaced persons and to take action to build confidence.

Turkey supports all efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of these conflicts and invites all parties to work towards a comprehensive and sustainable peace that would also provide for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. As a country of the region and a neighbour of Georgia, my country stands ready to contribute to all efforts towards this end and will continue to engage with its regional counterparts and cooperate closely with its friends and allies. It is

our deep conviction that steps in that direction will enhance the stability and prosperity of the Caucasus region as a whole.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic decided to vote in favour of resolution 64/296. We are convinced that the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees in Georgia, which has not changed since this case was brought for the first time before this Assembly, requires the attention of the international community, including the United Nations.

The Czech Republic is strongly committed to the principles of international humanitarian law. We are well aware of the importance of the Geneva talks and sincerely hope for their success. We reiterate, in the context of this humanitarian crisis, which needs to be resolved, our strong support for the security and stability of Georgia, respecting fully its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I call on the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Lomaia (Georgia): Together we have just adopted a resolution that lifts the hopes of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who were forced by violence and fear to flee their homes and communities. It is with my mind on these brave men, women and children, citizens of Georgia of many ethnic origins, that I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the Assembly.

Today's vote marks the third straight year that the Assembly has invoked the norms and principles of international law to defend the right of every Georgian IDP and refugee to return to his or her home. And with each passing year, the circle of understanding and support is widening. It is our responsibility to help transform the anguished dream of my compatriots — to return to their homes in our country's region of Abkhazia and its Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia — into a reality.

I know that Members' support of this resolution did not come easily — a fact that had little to do with the substance itself. This makes their affirmative vote even more noteworthy. Unfortunately, the moral clarity that guides us all on this issue has been challenged once again by strenuous attempts to politicize these efforts. But truth and dignity prevailed.

Despite all the unfair attempts aimed at persuading delegations to oppose the resolution, it was adopted by an even wider margin than in previous years. But they may rest assured that my country is in no way embittered by the politics that preceded the vote. Quite the opposite — we remain as determined as ever to bring dignity and relief to our compatriots who have suffered for so long. We will engage with all parties, including those who led the opposition to this resolution, to achieve its goals.

Today the General Assembly upheld the principles of this institution and the norms of the international community. I wish that this were enough. I can only hope that, a year from now when we gather again to discuss this issue, true progress will have been made on the ground.

Finally, on behalf of those who have suffered violence and discrimination because they were of the wrong ethnic background, we would like to once again express our heartfelt gratitude to each and every Member State that voted in favour of this resolution. I would also like to express my gratitude to those delegations that shifted their position from a negative stance last year to an abstention today. These, too, contributed to the positive dynamic around this resolution. It will never be forgotten by the people of my country.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In the light of the statements that have been made on the outcome of the voting, I would simply like to emphasize that the results once again confirm that a certain group of countries continues to pursue a politicized approach to and double standards on this issue, to the detriment of the practical steps being taken to resolve the current humanitarian problem in the region.

It is those very same countries that obstinately deny the Abkhazians and South Ossetians the opportunity to inform the international community about the truth of the situation, including with respect to the issue of the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons. Those who voted in favour of resolution 64/296 will bear full responsibility for the consequences of its adoption, including with regard to the Geneva process.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 14?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.